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Abstract

The word 'Spanglish', used most often to describe the casual oral registers of the speech of Hispanics in the USA, is an unfortunate and misleading term. Speakers of popular varieties of Spanish in the USA would be better served by recognizing that they are already speakers of Spanish. The present article is intended as a technical discussion of the empirical foundations for our position that there is no justification for the use of the term Spanglish. We demonstrate that features that characterize popular varieties of Spanish in the USA are, for the most part, parallel to those of popular forms of the language in Latin America and Spain. Further, we show that Spanish in the USA is not of a hybrid character, that is, not centrally characterized by structural mixing with English. We reject the use of the term Spanglish because there is no objective justification for the term, and because it expresses an ideology of exceptionalism and scorn that actually deprives the North American Latino community of a major resource in this globalized world: mastery of a world language. Thus on strictly objective technical grounds, as well as for reasons of personal and political development, the term Spanglish is to be discarded and replaced by the term Spanish or, if greater specificity is required, Spanish in the United States.

Keywords

bilingualism, language contact, Spanglish, US Hispanics, US Latinos, US Spanish

1. Introduction[1]

In a world shaped by the words we use to describe it, clear terminology helps us comprehend our surroundings, while poorly chosen or misleading terms hinder our understanding and distort our reality. The term *Spanglish*, used to refer to popular forms of the language of many Hispanics in the USA, is a case of the latter: a misleading term that sows confusion about the Spanish language and its speakers. The term is unfortunate for at least four reasons. First, it conceals the fact that the features that characterize popular forms of Spanish in the USA are, for the most part, parallel to those of popular forms of the language in Latin America and Spain; second, the term incorrectly

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suggests that popular Spanish in the USA is of an unusually hybrid character; third, it inaccurately implies that Spanish in the USA is centrally characterized by structural mixing with English; and fourth, it needlessly separates Spanish-speakers in the USA from those living elsewhere. The term expresses an ideology of exceptionalism that deprives the North American Latino community of one of its major resources: mastery of a world language whose potential contribution to both individuals and the community is undeniable. Speakers of popular varieties of Spanish in the USA would be better served in their efforts to learn formal varieties of Spanish, as well as English, by recognizing that they are already speakers of Spanish.

2. Popular forms of Spanish

We speak of 'popular Spanish' because it is this register of the language, and not its more formal or academic manifestations, that users of the term Spanglish have in mind. The term Spanglish refers neither to written registers nor to the language of news, interviews, and sports reports that fill Spanish language airways in the USA. When Latino advertisers, politicians, lawyers, school teachers, college professors, journalists, clergy, government officials, and corporate executives use Spanish in the public arena, their speech is not usually referred to as Spanglish. Rather, the term is generally reserved for speech in casual oral registers, especially, though not exclusively, when used by Latinos who seldom or never use Spanish for writing.

A cursory familiarity with the basic insights of linguistics and a concern over xenophobic tendencies in some sectors of US society will lead us to replace the term *Spanglish* with the far more accurate and descriptive term *Spanish* or, if more specifics are required, *popular Spanish of the USA*. The latter is parallel to terms such as popular Spanish of Puerto Rico, popular Spanish of Mexico, or of northern Argentina, central Spain, eastern Cuba, coastal Venezuela or countless other geographic designations.

3. Spanglish as a term of disparagement

The term *Spanglish* reflects a wide range of attitudes toward Spanish speakers in the USA and their speech-ways. The term is used positively as a badge of bicultural identity by some scholars in positions of leadership in the Latino community (Zentella, 2008, p. 6). Moreover, the term has found its way into the scholarly discussions of some linguists (Fairclough, 2003; Rothman & Rell, 2005; Zentella, 1997). It has also been actively promoted by literary scholars writing for the general public (Stavans, 2000a, 2000b, 2003). But there can be no question that the word Spanglish is often used to disparage Latinos in the USA and to cast aspersions on their ways of speaking. Our own Latino students often say 'I'm not good at Spanish; I speak Spanglish', and it is not unusual to hear that the term refers to 'a hodgepodge of English and Spanish, characterized by the types of errors commonly found among those who are learning a new language' (see, for example, the entries on the website howstuffworks.com). Even promoters of the term recognize its mostly negative implications: '[I]t is commonly assumed that Spanglish is a bastard jargon: part Spanish and part English, with neither gravitas nor a clear identity' (Stavans, 2000b, p.b7).

4. Ideology, politics, and the names of languages

Ideas about language, among the general public as well as among scholars, are seldom based exclusively on observations of fact or on technical or scientific considerations. Rather, linguistic discussions are generally conditioned by what scholars have called linguistic ideology (del Valle, 2007;

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Irvine & Gal, 2000; Woolard, 1998; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). As the names given to ways of speaking profoundly reflect political and ideological attitudes (witness the disputes between those who prefer to name the language *Castilian* or *Spanish*), we recognize that our own views regarding the term Spanglish may themselves be manifestations of ideological positions. But we also believe that questions related to the names of speech-ways can and should be discussed, whenever possible, in the context of objective observations. The present article is intended as a technical discussion of the empirical foundation for our position that the term Spanglish is a misnomer with no justification for its use.[2]

5. A language with few grandchildren

In a moment we will see many similarities between Spanish in the USA and Spanish in Spain and Latin America. However, we begin by pointing out a major difference. In Latin America and Spain we naturally find at least three, and sometimes four, contemporaneous generations of speakers of Spanish. By contrast, in the USA we generally find only two generations. In spite of the language's widespread presence and the continuous flow of immigrants who speak it, intergenerational transmission of Spanish within the USA is limited. As with other immigrant languages in North America, economic and political conditions tend to reduce the use of the language as generations succeed each other, so that Spanish disappears in many families within just three, and sometimes two, generations (Bills, Hudson, & Hernández-Chavez, 2000; Veltman, 2000; Zentella, 1997). Spanish shines brightly in many sectors of American life due primarily to its extensive use in homes, churches, workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, in media by immigrants and their children, and by the many institutions that serve, sell, or otherwise cater to them. However, by the time the children of immigrants pass Spanish to their own children, in most cases the language is a greatly diminished flame, and in others, mere embers of the speech-ways that their grandparents brought with them to the USA. We are, therefore, discussing, sadly, a language with few grandchildren.

6. Speakers of Spanish in the USA

The object of our interest, then, is the Spanish of millions of Latin American (and some Iberian) immigrants and their children. But living alongside these individuals, often within the same family, are Latinos who have mastered the Spanish language only passively and who use it infrequently. These third- (and sometimes second-) generation speakers clearly belong to the Latino communities of the USA, and often have a keen sense of personal affiliation with things Hispanic. But it would not be accurate to say of many of these individuals that they speak Spanish, since they do not have anything like productive mastery of the phonology, grammar, lexicon, and phraseology of the language. The discussion about the term Spanglish is thus not about these speakers, any more than it is about high school or college English-speaking students who, moving in the opposite direction, may be acquiring a still limited mastery of Spanish through formal instruction.

To be sure, the line that separates Spanish-speaking from non-Spanish-speaking Latinos in the USA cannot be drawn sharply and no attempt at establishing it can ultimately succeed. But even though the two groups are not perfectly discrete, it is useful for the present discussion to have some conception of who falls within the group of Spanish speakers under discussion in this article. In our thinking, the group of Spanish-speaking Latinos in the USA excludes many, probably most, third-generation Hispanics and what Lipski (1985) has called vestigial speakers; but it does clearly include many, perhaps most, first- and second-generation Latinos and most of those whom researchers sometimes call heritage speakers (Montrul, 2004; Potowski, 2002). It is the popular

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registers of the Spanish of this vast majority of first- and second-generation US Latinos that are the subject of our discussion.[3]

7. Local varieties of popular Spanish

Popular varieties of languages are characterized in all parts of the world by the presence of an abundance of lexical items and syntactic constructions that have a restricted geographical distribution. In the popular Spanish of any locale, one finds many features of what following common practice we call 'general Spanish', which are widely shared with other parts of the Spanish-speaking world. But alongside them, one also finds many lexical and grammatical elements that are highly specific to that location. We should expect nothing different when we look at Spanish in the USA.

The local lexicon of Spanish. Examples of lexical items that are found only in specific regions are well known, as is the fact that we also find in these locales general Spanish words for the same concepts, words that serve as what López-Morales (2006) calls *términos neutralizadores* 'neutralizing terms'. Corresponding to local terms for 'bus' like *camión*, *micro*, *colectivo*, *guagua*, *bus*, and *ómnibus*, we have the corresponding general Spanish term *autobús*; alongside local terms for 'car' like *máquina*, *coche*, and *carro* we find the neutralizer *automóvil* (López-Morales, 2006, p. 17). In these cases, and countless more, while the general Spanish term (the neutralizing term) is known everywhere, the local word is widely used by everyone in the local community, though it is usually unknown and rarely heard beyond the local borders.

We find the exact parallel in Spanish in the USA, where words like *sóbbuey*, *lonch*, *bildin*, *trok*, *jáiscul* (from English *subway*, *lunch*, *building*, *truck*, and *high school*) are common. These words, and many others, are known and used by Spanish speakers throughout the USA (even by those who neither know nor speak English, and may not even realize that the words are of English origin) while their currency in Spanish outside the USA is rather limited. But just as the existence of local vocabulary in Mexico, Argentina, Honduras, and so on, does not justify the coining of special names to refer to these local speech-ways, the existence of local vocabulary in the USA does not justify our coining a special term like Spanglish. Words like *bildin* and *jáiscul* allow us to speak of popular North American Spanish, just as, for example, *trusa* 'bathing suit' and *guagua* 'bus' allow us to speak of popular Cuban Spanish, but neither justifies terms like Spanglish or Cuban.

Doublets in Spanish in the USA. We know that in situations of language contact, speakers often use both the local term and the neutralizing term, in many cases with distinct meanings. For example, Otheguy, García, and Fernández (1989) have shown that for many Spanish immigrants in the USA, a *bildin* is a somewhat intimidating structure of many stories, like those found in USA cities, while an *edificio* is a more modest construction found more often in their homeland. Likewise, an *escuela secundaria*, with its *director*, is a type of educational institution found in Latin America; the term *jáiscul*, headed by a *principal,* is reserved for a different kind of North American educational institution.

These lexical pairs, called *doublets* in the research literature, demonstrate a subtle exploitation of the bilingual lexicon. In the following example, the speaker uses the word *beismen*, a local term derived from the English word *basement*, and the neutralizing term *sótano*:[4]

> hasta los cinco años, como vivíamos en un **beismen**, apartamento de **beismen**, toda mi cultura ... todo lo mío fue el español, yo no salía a jugar con los niños, todo lo que teníamos era ahí en ese **sótano**, que eran cuatro o cinco apartamentos, uno más limpio que el otro, el **sótano** era bellísimo. [370M]

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> until I was five, we lived in a **beismen**, a **beismen** apartment ... My whole culture, everything was in Spanish, I didn't go out to play with the kids, everything we had was in that **sótano**, there were four or five apartments, one cleaner than the next, the **sótano** was beautiful.

The reader will have noticed that the word *beismen* is used to refer to a type of modest living space, an *apartamento de beismen*. At the same time, *sótano* is used to describe not a living space, but rather, a part of a building. That is, many *sótanos* contain *apartamentos de beismen*. The words *bildin*, *jáiscul*, *beismen*, and many others like them represent a normal expansion of the bilingual lexicon that is called for by the extension of physical and cultural frontiers facing the speakers who have emigrated out of their homelands.

Local items and communication with outsiders. The use of lexical items whose distribution is restricted to a local area does not generally impede communication with outsiders who visit the area, though there may be some initial confusion. Examples such as the following abound. Recently arrived in Montevideo, Uruguay, a stranger in a café listens to a waiter tell the story of *un gurí que había tenido la osadía de entrar y pedir un chop* (a *gurí* who had the nerve to come in and ask for a *chop*). The stranger had no problems processing the waiter's syntax or the slightly unfamiliar Uruguayan accent, but could not understand the story because he didn't know two key words, *gurí* and *chop*. However, the lack of understanding was of short duration, because the visitor asked the waiter for clarification, and he did not hesitate to explain that there was a *niño* 'child' who walked into the bar and had the audacity to ask for a *cerveza* 'beer'.[5] None of this is surprising; in all corners of the Spanish-speaking world, the traveler may trip, from time to time, on words that are unknown in his or her own linguistic community.

Local items and communication with outsiders in Spanish in the USA. It is not unusual for Latin Americans or Spaniards who visit the USA for the first time to disdain the locals 'because Hispanics in the USA speak Spanglish'. Like the visitor in Montevideo, the visitor in the USA may face the use of local terms that result in a momentary lapse in communication. For instance, they may hear of very busy laborers who *no se bajan del trok ni para lonchar*, where local Spanish words *trok* 'truck' and *lonchar* 'to lunch' are used. Soon, it becomes clear that these are hurried workers that *no se bajan del camión ni para almorzar* 'they don't even get out of the truck to have lunch' with the general Spanish neutralizing terms *camión* 'truck' and *almorzar* 'to lunch' serving to rescue the communication. The experience in Montevideo with the *gurí* and the *chop* does not surprise us, nor does it lead us to give a special name to Uruguyan Spanish, and we are content with the concept of a popular variety of Spanish in Uruguay. Likewise, the experience with *el trok* and *lonchar* should neither surprise us nor lead us to coin a special term like Spanglish. The concept of a popular variety of Spanish in the USA should suffice.

8. Lexical borrowings in popular Spanish

There is a widespread but unfounded belief that Spanish in the USA has been given a special name because part of its lexicon consists of words of foreign, specifically English, origin. However, when we look at lexical items in other popular varieties of Spanish, we see that many of their words too have been borrowed from other languages. For example, in our Montevideo case, *gurí* came into Spanish from Guaraní, while *chop* was borrowed from German.

This is the general situation around the world: very frequently, local vocabulary is borrowed from other languages, most often from other languages that are spoken in the same area. In Mexico,

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the lawnmower works on *el zacate* 'lawn', which is *la yerba* in other places. My *panas* 'buddies, friends' in Puerto Rico are as important as my *cuates* in Mexico. All these words are quite *chéveres* 'cool' even though they may have come, linguistically speaking, from the *quimbambas* 'far away places'. Like the *gurí* in Uruguay and the *trok* and the *lonch* in the USA, it turns out that *zacate*, *cuate*, and many other well known words in the Spanish of Mexico, the country with the largest Spanish-speaking population in the world, are not of Spanish origin, but are borrowed from a neighboring language, Nahuatl. Similarly, *chévere* is from a language of Angola; and *quimbamba* is from Carabal.

9. Local meanings in popular Spanish

It is often said that an exceptional characteristic of Spanish in the USA is that words have meanings there that are different from the meanings they have in general Spanish or in popular varieties of Spanish in other places. For example, the US Spanish words *aplicacíon* 'application' and *carpeta* 'carpet' have different meanings elsewhere (where the word for 'application' is more likely to be *solicitud*, and the word for 'carpet' more likely to be *alfombra*, itself a borrowing from Arabic). But here again we are faced with a phenomenon that is widespread throughout the world. In languages everywhere, words acquire local meanings that are distinct from the meanings of the same words in other places. An example of this is the student from Latin America who has angered her teacher from Spain, and tells her not to become *brava* 'angry'; the teacher admonishes the student that bulls are *bravos* 'fierce', that she is just *enfadada* 'angry'. The word *bravo/a* is, of course, simply the local term in the student's Spanish for the general Spanish word *enfadada* (or *enojada*). There are many well-known, general Spanish words like *coger* 'to take', whose local meaning in many areas decorum prevents us from stating here, which illustrate clearly that words have different meanings in different regions. This is not a unique or defining feature of Spanish in the USA.

10. Morphology of regional varieties of Spanish

Another feature of Spanish in the USA that is said to justify the term Spanglish is that some words have morphological endings that are not heard in other parts of the Spanish-speaking world. But here too, the situation is parallel to that in other places. If the words *terapista* 'therapist' and *financiamiento* 'financing' in the USA surprise those who only know the terms *terapeuta* and *financiación*, this is the same sort of surprise that words in Latin America like *noticiario* 'newscast', *velatorio* 'wake', *competición* 'competition', and *explosionar* 'to explode' produce in those who only know the alternative forms, also used in Latin America, *noticiero*, *velorio*, *competencia*, and *explotar*. Morphological geographic variation, like lexical geographic variation, is a central characteristic of languages around the world, and commonly distinguishes local forms from one another, in Spanish and other languages alike.

11. Vocabulary of Spanish-speakers in the USA

While we have seen that the lexical characteristics of the Spanish spoken in the USA are similar to those of other popular varieties around the world, we have not addressed the question of scale. Perhaps the designation Spanglish can be justified if the proportion of borrowed words in Spanish in the USA is large. But this is not the case. Moreno-Fernández (2007) found that words with English etymology were less than 7 per cent of the total vocabulary of the Hispanic youth in Chicago whom he studied. Varra (2007) calculated the incidence of borrowings and codeswitches

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in naturally occurring speech, and found 8.1 English words for every 1000 words of spoken Spanish, representing a rate of borrowed lexical items of less than 1 per cent.

The parallel with the rest of the Spanish-speaking world in the area of lexis is now complete. We have seen that, throughout the world, popular lexicon is frequently unknown outside the local area; that it responds to the need to name cultural concepts that are specific to a certain region; that it often has distinctively local morphology; and that, in many cases, it consists of lexical items with origins in languages other than Spanish.

12. The phraseology of popular Spanish

A review of popular varieties of Spanish reveals many local features of phraseology as well. To begin with the best-known example, in some parts of Latin America one hears the phrase *te llamo de vuelta* 'I'll call you back', lit. 'I call you of back', while in others one hears *te devuelvo la llamada* 'I'll call you back', lit. 'I return the call'. These two phrases refer to an ordinary fact of modern life by means of two different metaphors.[6] In *llamar de vuelta*, the return of the call is compared to the physical return of the interlocutor, in the same way in which it is common in Spanish to say that a person can be back, as in *estar de vuelta.* In *devolver la llamada*, the call is conceptualized as a physical object; just as one can *devolver* 'return' a book or any other object, one can *devolver* a call. The two phrases rely on spatial metaphors applied to the call itself. A similar metaphor is evident in the equivalent phrase of popular Spanish in the USA, *te llamo para atrás* 'I'll call you back', lit. 'I'll call you for back'. This phrase simply represents a third metaphor to describe the phone call. Just as a car or any other vehicle can *dar para atrás* 'move back, go in reverse', lit. 'give for back' by passing through space already traveled, a phone call can go back by metaphorically passing through the same already-traveled space. The phrase rests on a metaphorical association between space and time that, far from being unusual, is well-worn in general Spanish and in many other languages. When we say of a problem *quedó atrás* 'it's behind us, it's left back', we relegate it, not back in space, but back in time. When we say *hace mucho tiempo atrás* 'a long time back', we are, again, referring not to spatial terms, but to temporal ones. Equally, the *llamar para atrás* of Spanish in the USA connects the second phone call with the first by relating the space meaning of *atrás* to the notion of time.

One objection that can be raised, however, is that the *llamadas de vuelta*, or *devueltas*, of Spain and Latin America are not based on a foreign model, while the *llamada para atrás* of the USA is a calque of English *call back*. But like local vocabulary (e.g., *cuate*, *palta*, *gurí*, *chop*, and so on), phraseology in many parts of the Spanish-speaking world is often also of non-Hispanic origin. The traveler passing through Madrid who reads an advertisement that says *tienes email en tiempo real con tarifa plana* 'you have email in real time at a flat rate' finds the phrases *tiempo real* and *tarifa plana*, which are clearly based on the phrases used by English speakers *real time* and *flat rate*.

13. Distinguishing between system and use: language and speech

The difference between the linguistic system and its use (often expressed as the distinction between *language* and *speech*) is one of the foundational concepts of modern linguistics.[7] This distinction allows us to see that phrases like *tiempo real*, *tarifa plana*, and *llamar para atrás* are innovations in the speech of Spanish-speakers, but they do not represent changes in these speakers' languages, that is, in their linguistic systems. Clearly, *tarifa plana* is a perfectly unremarkable Spanish phrase, despite the parallel with the English phrase *flat rate*. In *tarifa plana*, both words are common elements of Spanish vocabulary, and the phrase is constructed according to the grammar of Spanish, showing noun-adjective order and number and gender agreement between the words. Neither the

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words nor the structure is of English origin; rather, it is the idea of thinking of rates as flat that the advertisement writer has brought over, not from the English language, but from the commercial culture of English speakers. Similarly, although *llamar para atrás* shares a metaphorical similarity with the *call back* used by English speakers, it is clear that there is no admixture of the Spanish linguistic system with the English one. Spanish phrases composed of an infinitive followed by *para* and an adverb are quite ordinary in Spanish (e.g., *dar para atrás*). It is thus not hybridization with the English language that accounts for the expression *llamar para atrás*, but rather the fact that Spanish speakers in the USA are frequently also English speakers, and thus have an intimate connection with the conceptualizations of English speakers that leads them to exploit the resources of Spanish in this novel way. In a comparison with Spain or Latin America, this is a cultural, conceptual, or communicative difference, but not a linguistic one, as the language itself has not changed.[8]

The point can be made clearer by looking at one final example which will illustrate the cultural and conceptual – not linguistic – connection between the two cultures of Spanish speakers in the USA. One cannot live there for long without celebrating, on the fourth Thursday of November, the holiday that Spanish speakers in the USA call *Día de dar gracias* or *Día de acción de gracias*. While these phrases are reminiscent of the English name, *Thanksgiving Day*, the Spanish phrases are distinctly Spanish, generated entirely of Spanish vocabulary, and framed by ordinary Spanish syntax as commonly found in the names of other holidays (e.g., *el Día de Reyes* 'Kings' Day', *Día de Navidad* 'Christmas Day'). The observation that no one says *Día de dar gracias* outside the USA, which is true enough, tells us nothing about the linguistic system of Spanish. It tells us only about the cultural setting in which Spanish speakers in the USA find themselves.

It is important to recognize the mastery of the Spanish system that underlies these phrases, in which speakers reveal their capacity to speak perfect popular Spanish while expressing the broader US cultural reality of which they are a part. For example, we hear speakers talk about resolving economic difficulties by *mi medio tiempo* 'my part-time job', lit. 'my half time'.[9] When dealing with a problem, speakers report that *me siento ya con otra perspectiva*, *con otra mente* 'I feel now with a different perspective, with a different mind', or they say that they have *cambiado de mente* 'changed their minds'. *Medio tiempo* is simply the half time of part-time work, quite normal in the New York economy. The metaphor that English speakers use with the phrase *change my mind* has been adopted, in clear Spanish, by the speaker who says that he has *cambiado de mente*, that is to say, that he now has another perspective. While clearly based on US culture, each phrase fails to show any elements from the linguistic system of English, displaying instead a clear mastery of Spanish lexical and syntactic resources.

The term Spanglish is thus, when applied to these phrases, highly inaccurate, as it suggests a mixture of linguistic systems that is simply not aligned with the facts. A linguistic system is not composed of a list of uses, since uses frequently differ from one cultural setting to another, and they change rapidly when the cultural environment changes. By contrast, the linguistic system is composed of the lexical, phonological, and grammatical mechanisms that underlie these uses. For the appellation Spanglish to be justifiable, one would have to demonstrate that there exists in the USA a community of speakers who have a new, and different, underlying linguistic system. (And this, of course, would have to be distinguished from the attempts at speaking Spanish by those who have not mastered the language.) Rather, we find in the Spanish of the USA what we find elsewhere, namely the development of phrases in perfect Spanish that express new cultural elements.

14. The syntax of popular Spanish

We are now ready to approach the more complicated issue of syntax, and we begin with a brief look at object pronouns. In general Spanish, and in popular Spanish in many areas, the dative pronoun

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is not marked for gender; that is, *le* occurs in both *le dí el libro a Maria* 'I gave the book to Maria' and *le dí el libro a Carlos* 'I gave the book to Carlos'. But in the syntax of popular Peninsular Spanish we find that dative pronouns are marked for gender: *le dí el libro a Carlos* but *la dí el libro a María*. This example illustrates that there are syntactic features that are found in some Spanish-speaking locales (in this case, Spain) that are not found in others.

But before continuing with illustrations of parallel local syntax in Spanish in the USA, we must first provide a broader overview of the syntactic processes that characterize Spanish there. The two most notable are (a) reduction of paradigms, particularly among the second generation; and (b) the expansion and acceleration of changes already under way in other parts of the Spanish-speaking world.

14.1 Reduction of paradigms

In many settings of widespread bilingualism and language contact, paradigmatic reductions have been frequently noted. A case in point in Spanish in the USA is the verbal paradigm, which scholars have described as becoming reduced in the second generation. The verbal inventory of Spanish in the first generation is essentially the same as that found among speakers in non-immigrant communities; however, in subsequent generations, abbreviated paradigms of tense and mood are found. Among many US-born Latinos, past subjunctives, as in *quería que viniera* 'I wanted him to come', and complex forms of the subjunctive, as in *me hubiera gustado que viniera* 'I would have wanted him to come', which are frequently used by first-generation speakers, are found in sharply reduced frequencies or are missing altogether (Silva-Corvalán, 1994; Zentella, 1997). Among many of these speakers, the role played by these tenses has been taken over by other forms, or messages at this level of complexity are being conveyed only in English. Unlike what we found with respect to lexis and phraseology, this reduction of the verbal paradigm does represent a clear change in the linguistic system of many speakers of Spanish in the USA.

There are significant implications of these findings. North Americans of Hispanic heritage do not add structural or systemic features from English to the linguistic system of their immigrant ancestors; rather, they simply lose certain linguistic mechanisms or shift around the ones they inherited from the previous generation. This represents not a systemic mixing, but rather a reduction of systemic resources.

14.2 The extension of existing syntactic processes

In popular Spanish in the USA, we find not only reductions in the inventory of structural mechanisms, such as those in the verb tenses and moods, but we also find that certain grammatical processes occur more frequently and that their applicability is extended to additional contexts. For example, scholars have studied the use of subject personal pronouns, which in Spanish can be either present or absent (*canto* ~ *yo canto*, both 'I sing'). Research shows, among the second generation of US Latinos, a measurable increase in the number of verbs where subject pronouns are present, most likely due to the influence of the nearly categorically overt use in English (Montrul, 2004; Otheguy & Zentella, 2007; Otheguy, Zentella, & Livert, 2007; Toribio, 2004).

This quantitative increase has repercussions in specific linguistic environments. In general and popular Spanish in most locales, generic references in the third person plural (e.g., *dicen que no hay clases mañana* 'they say there are no classes tomorrow') occur almost always without a subject pronoun, and are indicated only by the inflection of the verb (*dicen*, not *ellos dicen*). However, one does find, in the Spanish of all areas, overt pronouns in generic third person plurals in some cases, particularly in references to corporations or other large institutions. For instance, when speaking of

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the very general authority of the university, a professor says *Parece que ellos quieren que empecemos a hacer esos cursos en la sesión matutina* 'It seems that they want us to start running these courses in the morning session'. Research shows that this option is greatly extended in Spanish in the USA, where the possibility of using overt subject pronouns for generics has become much more general (Lapidus & Otheguy, 2005a, 2005b).

These two characteristics of Spanish in the USA, the loss of structural resources with respect to the verbal paradigm, and the intensification of possibilities that occur with low frequency in Spain and Latin America, are responsible for most of what appears to be the unusual syntax of Spanish in the USA. However, neither of these features is the product of the penetration of English.

14.3 Other syntactic features

Prepositions stand out in many languages, including Spanish, by their diachronic instability and synchronic variation. In the speech of recently arrived Latinos, whose Spanish is surely operating under the linguistic systems they learned in Latin America, we find examples like *a ese tiempo* 'at that time' and *de tal punto* 'to such a point', where general Spanish usually has *en ese tiempo* and *a tal punto*.

These recently arrived immigrants exemplify the kind of prepositional variation that we see, to a greater degree, among US Spanish speakers, especially in the second generation. In general Spanish, as well as in many local popular forms of the language, direct objects that refer to animate beings are frequently accompanied by the preposition *a*, as in *vi a Juan* 'I saw John' but *vi la película* 'I saw the movie'. However, among second-generation speakers we find many animate direct objects without *a*, a fact that appears to reflect a relaxation or perhaps a complete absence of the general Spanish constraint: *Conocí mi esposo* 'I met my husband', *vi mi hija* 'I saw my daughter', and so on. These uses seem to reflect a difference between the linguistic system of these speakers and the linguistic system that their parents brought with them when they arrived in New York. And, as we shall see presently, the preposition *a* is not the only one that can behave differently in Spanish in the USA, where *con* 'with' also has distributional properties that tend to be different in the USA than in other parts of the Spanish-speaking world.

Let us review one more syntactic feature of popular Spanish in the USA. The use of the gerund among some second-generation speakers shows characteristics not usually found in Spanish in Spain or Latin America, such as *aprendí inglés cuando empecé a mirando televisión* 'I learned English when I began watching television', and *fue como leer un libro o viendo un programa de televisión* 'it was like reading a book or watching a television program'. It is almost certain that these utterances would not have been generated by the grammar of the parents of these speakers. In both general and local forms of Spanish, the gerund is not nominal and requires simultaneity with another event, as in *mi hermana es manager y trabaja cortando pelo* 'my sister is a manager and she works cutting hair'. The speech of these informants does not seem to be governed by a linguistic system that restricts gerunds to simultaneous action of another verb (López-Morales, 2003, p. 181ff.).

15. Syntactic hybridization and the word Spanglish

Have we perhaps now, with these data on prepositions and gerunds, found evidence of mixture with English in the popular Spanish in the USA, especially among second-generation speakers? The answer seems to be, yes. Simultaneous gerunds acting as nominals are likely the result of contact with the grammar of English. Likewise, the direct objects that refer to animate beings in

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verbal constructions without the preposition *a* seem also to indicate the existence of an underlying Spanish system into which elements of English syntax have penetrated. Here too, we should note parallels with other Spanish-speaking locales; we know, for example, that there are bilingual zones in Peru in which clitics and gerunds reveal an underlying linguistic system of Spanish that shares grammatical elements with Quechua (cf. Klee, 1996).

For our argument that the term Spanglish is not well founded, it is important to note that the influence of English that we have now seen is limited to small compartments of a much larger grammar. When we calculate the proportion of features that Spanish in the USA shares with Spanish elsewhere, and compare it with the few elements that have been imported from English, the resulting picture is that of an enormously complex linguistic system characterized by an overall Spanish structure, where a handful of English elements exist alongside thousands of ancestral Spanish features. To illustrate, let us look closely at the following sample of speech from a second-generation speaker of Puerto Rican origin. The passage includes two of the elements (nominal gerunds and innovative uses of certain prepositions) that we have discussed:

> Después de trabajar en la conferencia y **ayudando** con la gente y las recepciones, y presentándome para ayudar a las personas que están allí … encontré con mucha gente que conozco ahora muchos amigos … *you know I met a lot of new people*. Despues íbamos a salir … vamos a los discos a beber. Pero que ahí también **conocí mucha gente**, y salí con un muchacho ahí que **se enamoró conmigo** pero que bueno **yo no estaba enamorada con él** [risa] pero que todavía él me llama también. Todavía me llama a ver cómo estoy, y le digo, lo más bien y cómo tú estás, y bien y quiere ir para Nueva York a visitarme, y le dije bueno, yo no sé, porque yo voy para [risa] California pero que allá los discos allá, ay tan tan chévere, que están allá. [401P]

> After working on the conference and helping with the people and the receptions, and introducing myself to help the people who are there ... I met a lot of people whom I now know ... many friends ... you know I met a lot of new people. Later we would go out ... we go to the discos to drink. But there I met a lot of people, and I went out with a boy who fell in love with me but that, well, I was not in love with him [laughter] but that he still calls me. He still calls me to see how I am, and I say, very well and how are you, and well and he wants to go to New York to visit me, and I said, well, I don't know, because I am going to [laughter] California but the discos there, oh so cool, they are there.

We see in this passage a simultaneous gerund (*después de trabajar en la conferencia y ayudando con la gente*). We also see, in *conocí mucha gente* (equivalent to *conocí a mucha gente* in Spanish elsewhere), and in *se enamoró conmigo* (equivalent to *se enamoró de mí*), prepositional uses that suggest that elements of English grammar may be influencing the underlying linguistic system of this speaker.

It is important to remember that these phenomena are variable, for this speaker, and in Spanish in the USA more generally. In this passage, the personal *a* is not always omitted (cf. the traditional usage of *para ayudar a las personas*), and a gerund does not always occur when the grammar of Spanish calls for an infinitive (cf. the traditional usage of *después de trabajar*). More importantly, while we see that these sentences appear to include mechanisms imported from English, we also find an overwhelming proportion of elements of Spanish grammar. As in Spanish in general, the speaker places complements after nuclei (*conocí mucha gente*), uses verbs in different tenses, inflects them to agree with their subjects, assigns them to different conjugations, and distinguishes between regular and irregular verbs. Moreover, the speaker makes nouns agree with their adjectives, and has good control of both simple and complex verb forms (*voy*, *iba a salir*). In addition,

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this speaker, guided by her grammar of Spanish, places prepositions before their complements (*de trabajar*, *para ayudar*); locates pronominal objects before the verb (*me llama*) and never puts them after the verb as in English, while at the same time deftly managing their postposition if the verb is in the infinitive (*a visitarme*). In interrogatives, she preposes pronominal subjects of verbs, as is the norm in the Caribbean Spanish of her parents (*cómo tú estás*), and does not, as one would in English, place the pronominal subject after the verb (*how are you*); she marks agreement between articles and nouns (*la conferencia*, *las recepciones*), a grammatical feature, again, that is not part of English. Further, she alternates between expressed subject pronouns (*yo no estaba*) and null subjects (*que conozco*), and does not insist, as in English, that all subject pronouns be overt.

The point, then, is that though there are indeed two linguistic features attributable to English in this speech sample, the speaker relies on a linguistic mechanism that is almost entirely Spanish, in which the presence (variable, not categorical) of structural elements of English represents a very small proportion of the total.

16. The name of a way of speaking?

Some researchers who have accepted the term Spanglish have argued that the word is not intended as the name of a hybrid language, but rather, that it refers to a way of using the languages. In Zentella (1997) the term refers to conversational and communicative strategies of bilingual Puerto Rican New Yorkers, and more concretely, to the bilingual practice of inserting phrases and sentences in English into Spanish discourse, or vice versa.[10] However, the very form of the word, and the way we usually think about languages, directly lead to a misunderstanding, as the word Spanglish is naturally interpreted as a reference to a linguistic hybrid. If we proposed the word *grinitosis*, and insisted that it was not the name of an illness, or that the word *grinocide* is not a type of killing, we should not be surprised to be misunderstood. The word Spanglish is misleading because the components of this word are obviously the names of two other languages, Spanish and English, and hearers reasonably conclude that Spanglish too must be the name of a language, a mix of its two component parts.

The ambiguity of the term is also evident in the work of Ilan Stavans, for whom the term Spanglish refers sometimes to a language (the title of one book speaks of a *new American language*); at other times, Spanglish refers to a way of using language, and at still others, to the meeting of two different cultures (Stavans, 2000a; 2003). The facts of speech that we have reviewed in this article demonstrate that the encounter of two cultures and the practices of bilinguals have not led to anything that could empirically be considered a new language.

17. Consequences

We have rejected the term Spanglish because it cannot be justified on the basis of observation and analysis of actual linguistic usage. Outside this analytical perspective, however, we may also ponder the political and social ramifications of the word. We believe that the term contributes to the fiction that Latin Americans in the USA and their children speak a hybrid language that is fundamentally different from the Spanish found in other places, and that this view does not benefit the over 35 million Latinos of the USA. We believe that the idea that Spanish in the USA is qualitatively different from that of Spain and Latin America is actually harmful to the community of its speakers.

As we have noted, many Hispanics in the USA use the term Spanglish with pride, considering it a badge of identity and self-esteem (Zentella, 2008). (But note the absence of the term in a most

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recent discussion of identity and Spanish in the USA in Niño-Murcia & Rothman, 2008). There are Latin Americans of all generations, including artists, professors, journalists and other opinion makers, who proudly proclaim that they speak Spanglish, according this term a level of covert prestige. Nevertheless, it is hard to see what advantages can derive for a person to conceive of himself as a speaker of Spanglish rather than as a speaker of Spanish. In our globalized world, no one can benefit by repudiating their own knowledge of a major world language.

Latino leaders who refer to popular Spanish in the USA as Spanglish, with the clear implication that it is not Spanish, are connecting, sadly, to an old North American tradition of denigrating immigrants from the Spanish-speaking world. A strategy of scorn and contempt of Spanish speakers was established in the USA in the 1940s and 1950s in the wake of the early waves of Latin American immigration. Many academics and commentators of the time demeaned the Spanish of these immigrants because it was not Castilian Spanish. That which you speak, the immigrants were admonished, is not Spanish, because it does not reflect the norms of north-central Spain. This attitude, which had not existed in this form in Spain or Latin America but was largely a US-made product, held sway for many years, as a form of dismissal of the language of hundreds of thousands of Spanish speakers. Many of them accepted this criticism and decided that the language that they had brought from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, or elsewhere, was of little value. The scorn directed at their language was an integral part of the racial and personal devaluations to which many Latin Americans have been and are still subjected in North America (Urciuoli, 1996). Yesterday's strategy of depriving immigrants of their Spanish language because it was not Castilian has been transmuted, today, into the attempt to take it from them by labeling it as Spanglish.

Looking at popular Spanish in Latin America or Spain, we find speakers at many levels of the socio-economic scale and with many different levels of income and education. Most speakers who have limited mastery of the formal registers of their language know that there are routes to personal and economic progress that involve, in part, the acquisition of precisely these more formal registers. An effective strategy for US educators and opinion makers would be to stress the continuity that exists between popular and educated forms of Spanish in North America. In this way, speakers of popular Spanish in the USA can be reassured that they need only expand their linguistic repertoires, not learn a whole new language. Using the word Spanglish is an unfortunate way of depriving the Latin American community of an important path to advancement: the potential to master formal spoken and written Spanish, an outcome that is far more likely if one conceives of one's own language as a local form of Spanish rather than as a different language called Spanglish.

18. Summary

We have seen that the language of Latinos in the USA is simply one more popular variety of Spanish. Like other popular varieties, it is marked by local lexical items that are often of non-Hispanic origin, and whose morphologies and meanings are often little known outside the local area. When we count these borrowed lexical items of US popular Spanish, we find that their incidence is very low, even among the second generation. Popular Spanish in the USA also includes both linguistic and conceptual elements from the English-speaking world. In oral discourse, speakers of Spanish in the USA frequently alternate between English and Spanish, following clear patterns and well-studied rules. But in itself, this behavior, common among bilinguals worldwide, does not justify the use of the term Spanglish. The intent of reserving the word Spanglish to refer only to a way of speaking (rather than to a language) fails completely, as the word Spanglish, by its very nature, suggests that a new language is being referenced.

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We have also noted that a syntactic feature of Spanish in the USA is a simplification of paradigmatic resources, especially in the inventory of tenses. While some may consider these simplifications deplorable, they do not represent any kind of mixture, and do not justify the use of the term Spanglish, which inaccurately suggests hybridization with English and carries with it, in many cases, a disparagement of the linguistic competence of Spanish speakers. In fact, we have seen that a noteworthy feature of popular Spanish in the USA is the overwhelming prevalence of Spanish syntax and lexicon, and that the few, occasional elements of English syntax that do underlie a discourse that is otherwise entirely generated by a Spanish grammar add up to a very small proportion of the grammatical competence of the speaker.

The data that we have presented clearly point to the conclusion that the term Spanglish is unnecessary and objectively inaccurate. In spite of the good intentions of those who support the use of the word, the term is not only technically flawed, but it also contributes to closing the doors of personal and economic progress to speakers who would be better served by thinking of themselves as speakers of Spanish. Whenever the term Spanglish is used to refer to the speech of Spanish speakers in the USA, it should be discarded. Academics and opinion makers should replace it by the plain and simple term Spanish or, if greater specificity is required, Spanish in the United States.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this article, written in Spanish, is in Otheguy (2009).
2. Other scholars, such as Lipski (2004, 2008), have taken a similar view.
3. In a vast scholarly literature offering descriptions of the grammar of US Latinos from very different perspectives, the forms of speech encompassed within the scope of what we consider Spanish in the USA have often been analyzed as containing features that give some evidence of simplification and of contact influence from English (Lipski, 1996; Montrul, 2004, 2008; Otheguy & Zentella, 2007; Otheguy, Zentella, & Livert, 2007; Silva-Corvalán, 1994; Zapata, Sánchez, & Toribio, 2005; Zentella, 1997). But these authors, while stressing in their different analyses the differences between the underlying competence of these speakers and that of their co-linguals in Latin America, do not usually conceive of this population as not speaking Spanish. Details on the wide-ranging Spanish abilities of these speakers can be found in some of our work (Otheguy, 2009).
4. Data in this article are from the Otheguy-Zentella corpus, a large sample of Spanish speech developed at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York by the first author of the present article and Ana Celia Zentella of the University of California, San Diego. The corpus consists of interviews with 140 Spanish speakers living in New York, comprising both first- and second-generation consultants from six countries and two distinct Latin American zones. A first-generation consultant is a person born in Latin America and raised there past the age of 3; a second-generation consultant is a person born in the USA or brought to the USA before the age of 3. Details on the corpus are available in Otheguy and Zentella (2007), Otheguy et al. (2007), and other publications. The number that appears at the end of quoted passages identifies the speaker in our internal files.
5. There are some differences between a generic *cerveza* and a Uruguayan *chop*, which is drunk from a big mug with a sturdy handle, filled with a half liter of beer, quite different from the *cerveza* the visitor was expecting.
6. The importance of metaphor in language has been amply documented, and eloquently described in Lakoff and Johnson (1980).
7. The introduction of the idea of a linguistic system is generally credited to the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and is also critically important in the work of the US linguist Noam Chomsky, whose concept of linguistic competence is roughly parallel to that of Saussure's *langue*. But similar notions can be found as well in the work of previous scholars, such as the Spaniard Sánchez de las Brozas and the German Wilhelm von Humboldt.

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8. The linguists' custom of speaking of structural calques is thus unfortunate, because these phrases are not calques of anything in the structure of English; rather, they express, in perfect Spanish, concepts (not structures) drawn from North American culture, but not from the English language. For discussion, see Otheguy (1993, 1995).
9. These examples, like others in this article, are from the Otheguy-Zentella corpus of Spanish in New York. (See Note 4.)
10. Zentella (1997) irrefutably demonstrates that these linguistic practices are neither chaotic nor random, but rather are systematic, patterned, purposeful behavior that lends itself to analysis (cf. Auer, 1998; Myers-Scotton, 1993).

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